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LETTER DATED 24 MAY 1996 FROM THE CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter jointly addressed by H.E. Mr. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and H.E. Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of OAU, on the question of Western Sahara.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Fesseha A. TESSEMA
Chargé d'affaires

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Annex

Letter dated 23 May 1996 from the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity addressed to the President of the Security Council

We have been following closely developments regarding the question of Western Sahara.

As you are aware, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has always been keen to see that an atmosphere of peace, security and understanding is restored in the region and has shown its disposition to cooperate fully with the United Nations in the faithful implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara. It is in that context that OAU deployed a group of official observers to follow the process of identification of voters. OAU has consistently stressed the importance it attaches to a peaceful and lasting solution to this question through the organization of a free, fair and impartial referendum for the people of Western Sahara in conformity with the settlement plan.

We are aware of the tremendous efforts deployed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations aimed at implementing the settlement plan. We are equally conscious of the involvement and the total engagement of the Security Council in the attainment of that objective. We are also aware of the many obstacles and difficulties that have been faced in the process. To this end, OAU has always encouraged the United Nations Secretary-General and the United Nations Security Council to persevere in their efforts to secure the understanding and cooperation of both Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) towards the implementation of the settlement plan.

We are deeply concerned at the present impasse in the implementation of the settlement plan as a result of difficulties encountered in the identification process of the voters.

As the Security Council is having consultations on this issue based on the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/1996/343 and Corr.1), we deemed it necessary to bring to your attention and through you to the members of your Council our common concerns.

We are concerned that any relaxation of efforts of the United Nations in the implementation of the settlement plan could further complicate the current impasse. Notwithstanding the obstacles thus far encountered, we believe that it is important for the United Nations to remain actively involved in pursuit of the settlement of the conflict. We further strongly believe that the United Nations should continue to pursue its efforts aimed at implementing the settlement plan for Western Sahara with renewed commitment and dynamism. In this respect, we are of the view that further efforts should be vigorously deployed for the speedy resumption of the identification process. In this regard, given the nature of the situation, we feel that it is important to do everything possible with a view to encouraging direct dialogue between the two

parties so as to promote confidence and trust and thus create the most propitious conditions to address the pending problems.

It is our earnest hope that the United Nations Security Council will ensure that nothing will be done that could jeopardize the implementation process of the settlement plan for Western Sahara with far-reaching implications for peace, stability and security in the region.

We would like to reiterate our fervent hope that in addition to ensuring that the present cease-fire continues to be respected by both parties, efforts will be deployed to create the necessary conditions for an early resumption of the identification process in conditions of transparency and in conformity with the provisions of the settlement plan for Western Sahara.

Finally, on behalf of OAU, we would like to reaffirm our commitment to support the United Nations efforts and to work closely together towards the implementation of the settlement plan for Western Sahara. We believe that it is in the best interest of both parties as well as in the interest of the region and the continent as a whole.

(Signed) Meles ZENAWI
Prime Minister of the Federal
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
and current Chairman of OAU

(Signed) Salim Ahmed SALIM
Secretary-General of OAU